



Ruth Johnson
Michigan Secretary of State

House Testimony Speaker Notes

Redistricting and Elections Committee

Tuesday, January 24, 2012 (9:00 a.m.)

1. Thank you **Chairman Lund** and the members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today on my Secure and Fair Elections, or SAFE, election integrity package.
2. I also want to acknowledge **Representatives Knollenberg, Tyler, Forlini and Jacobsen** for their leadership and partnering with me on this effort, along with your colleagues in the Senate.
3. When I was elected Secretary of State, one of my top priorities, in addition to streamlining services, cutting costs and improving customer service, was to ensure integrity in our elections system.

4. As a former county clerk, election integrity is a deeply rooted passion for me. In fact, it is the reason I sought the office of Secretary of State and it is the reason I sit before you today.

5. To me, there is nothing more important to America, to our values and democracy, than secure and fair elections.

6. I only have to point to headlines from the past year to illustrate the current vulnerabilities we now face...

- Campaign finance violations
- Precincts that can't be recounted because of errors
- Voter rolls containing people who not citizens, who have moved out of Michigan or died-
- And the fake tea party scandal...

7. Today, as Michigan's Chief Elections Officer, I ask for the support of this committee in rectifying such vulnerabilities.

8. Last fall, I formally announced my SAFE initiative, which stands for Secure and Fair Elections.
9. This package consists of new policies, expanded technology and legislation, all of which are defined by three clear goals of the legislation before you:
 - Tougher campaign finance laws;
 - Cleaner voter rolls
 - And safeguarding the integrity of the process
10. While my office is working to fortify processes through the tools available to us, this package relies heavily on the power of the Legislature to enact additional safeguards.
11. Before you today are House Bills 5058, 5059, 5061, 5062 and 5063, sponsored by your colleagues and initiated by my office, that target these three goals.

TOUGHER CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS

12. Among these is legislation that toughens our campaign finance laws by ensuring contributions are spent on legitimate campaign activities.
13. Specifically, House Bill 5058 sponsored by Representative Knollenberg imposes new restrictions for legal defense spending by prohibiting the use of campaign funds for personal legal battles.
14. And to discourage calculated and deliberate efforts to deceive voters, such as the fake Tea Party we exposed in Oakland County, House Bills 5059 and 5063 sponsored by Representative Tyler require earlier and more frequent disclosure of financing by new political party formation efforts and for ballot question committees.
15. Both of these bills will help us fight abuse, plug loopholes and demand transparency and accountability. Voters must know who is funding these efforts.

SAFEGUARDING ELECTION INTEGRITY

16. When we talk about security and fairness, nothing is more important than the integrity of our elections.
17. In 2010, the election for the 84th House seat was a close battle and required a recount. Over 1/3 of the precincts in that district were not “recount-able” due to mistakes associated with securing the ballots and clerical errors.
18. It is critical that we work with our local clerks, who do an outstanding job on the front line of elections, to do what we can to ensure accuracy in counting ballots.
19. Before you today is House Bill 5062 proposed by Representative Forlini. This legislation puts in place the safeguards we need to ensure election integrity, including receiving boards, post election audits, enhanced clerk training and continuing education.
20. Other components of the legislation before you targets voter intimidation, misinformation and ballot coaching.

21. Representative Forlani's bill expands prohibitions on voter

intimidation and misinformation while House Bill 5061
by Representative Jacobsen helps protect our seniors by
requiring that information on the prohibition against ballot
coaching be posted within residential care facilities.

22. We are also working to protect the integrity of absentee
ballots.

23. Representative Jacobsen's bill proposes photo ID and
affidavit of identity requirements for absentee voters who
pick-up their applications from their clerk's office.

24. This would make the requirements consistent with
existing photo ID laws for those who vote in person on
Election Day. This consistent protocol will provide a
simple safeguard for protecting ballot integrity.

25. Finally, we are also working to remove vulnerabilities
in the process.

- My office is working with the federal government as well as neighboring states to help ensure our voter rolls are accurate.

- We are also pushing to expand the use of electronic pollbooks and technology to reduce errors and improve ballot security.

26. And we've created an Elections Crimes Unit with the Assistance of the Attorney General's Office. Through the SAFE initiative, we are working diligently to strengthen the integrity of our elections, but we need the enactment of this legislation to help ensure that our elections are secure and fair.

27. We need you, the members of this committee, to champion this effort through support of House Bills 5058, 5059, 5061, 5062 and 5063 proposed by your colleagues.

28. Thank you for allowing me this time to testify before you today.

29. Chris Thomas, the State Administrator for the Bureau of Elections, and Chris Hackbarth, Director of Government Affairs for our department, are here with me to today to help answer any questions you may have.

